



## RECEPTION ANALYSIS OF HORROR GAME CONTENT ON THE WINDAH BASUDARA YOUTUBE CHANNEL

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### Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan menganalisis penerimaan audiens untuk game horror pada channel YouTube Windah Basudara dengan pendekatan kualitatif dan menggunakan teori resepsi dari Stuart Hall. Dengan menggunakan teknik wawancara, penelitian ini menggali banyak aspek penafsiran, pengaruh perilaku penyampaian kreator, serta aspek sosio psikologi yang berpengaruh pada penafsiran. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa audiens menafsirkan isi konten secara variatif terdapat respon dominan hingga resistensi, sebagian besar dipengaruhi oleh pengalaman pribadinya, budaya, serta konteks sosial yang melingkupinya. Gaya penyampaian konten yang ekspresif dan interaktif dari Windah Basudara turut memberikan dampak terhadap pengalaman menonton dan penafsiran yang berbeda-beda bagi setiap individu. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi penting dalam mengkaji interaksi media digital dengan konten yang emosional dan bersifat interaktif serta kontemporer, di satu sisi, dan merespon pada dinamika perbandingan pengaruh yang cepat terhadap kreasi konten pada audiens di era digital.

**Kata Kunci:** Game Horror; Interpretasi Audiens; Resepsi Media; Teori Resepsi; Youtube.

### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze audience acceptance of horror games on Windah Basudara's YouTube channel with a qualitative approach and using Stuart Hall's recipe theory. Using interview techniques, this study explores many aspects of interpretation, the influence of creator delivery behavior, and sociopsychological aspects that influence interpretation. The results of the study show that audiences interpret the content in a variety of ways - there are dominant responses to resistance, mostly influenced by their personal experiences, culture, and the social context that surrounds them. Windah Basudara's expressive and interactive content delivery style also has an impact on the viewing experience and interpretation that varies for each individual. This study makes an important contribution in examining the interaction of digital media with emotional, interactive and contemporary content, on the one hand, and responds to the dynamics of rapid comparison of influences on content creation on audiences in the digital era.*

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**Keywords:** *Audience Interpretation; Horror Game; Media Reception; Reception Theory; Youtube.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

This research examines audience reception, which can be defined as the process by which messages delivered by a sender are received and interpreted by message recipients or viewers through media content they watch or consume (Ghassani & Nugroho, 2019). Based on the title of this study, it can be understood that mass media is able to disseminate information easily and rapidly, one of which is through YouTube. This platform has a significant influence on its audiences or viewers. Moreover, the presentation of the horror genre attracts increasing public attention, allowing the content to effectively generate audience reception within society.

In this study, Windah Basudara was selected as the research subject. Windah Basudara, whose real name is Brando Franco Windah, was born on March 14, 1992, in Manado, North Sulawesi. He is a content creator and broadcaster who first gained recognition through live-streaming video games on YouTube. He is also well known for referring to his fans as “Bocil Kematian.” The Windah Basudara YouTube channel has been active since January 7, 2019, and primarily features content related to gaming, horror gameplay, storytelling, reactions, and light educational content. The name “Windah Basudara” carries a specific meaning: “Windah” originates from his family name, while “Basudara” comes from the Manado language, meaning “brothers” or “siblings.”

The channel is characterized by expressive vocal delivery, spontaneous humor, emotional expression, and strong interaction with viewers during live streams. Windah Basudara has approximately 7.8 million subscribers with more than 2 billion total views. He also demonstrates a very high engagement rate due to active audience comments and a strong fan community. The Windah Basudara YouTube channel was awarded Favorite Gaming Content Creator at the Indonesian Esports Awards 2021 and is considered one of the top gaming channels in Indonesia. This recognition is attributed to his strong delivery and storytelling abilities, which create a deep emotional connection with viewers. This can be seen in how Windah successfully transforms tense situations into humorous moments, and how his content easily goes viral as it aligns with viewers’

### **Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri  
Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id

cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. Consequently, this influences audience perception in interpreting the meaning of the content presented (Hermawan & Kristoyo, 2023).

Along with these developments, media consumption has undergone significant changes in line with rapid technological advancements. Among various media platforms, video gameplay content on YouTube has become one of the most attention-grabbing forms, particularly among younger audiences. YouTube is no longer merely an entertainment platform; it has evolved into an interactive communication space where audiences can directly provide responses and feedback to content creators. One of the most popular genres in gameplay content is horror games (Milenio, 2023). This genre offers a unique appeal through feelings of tension, fear, surprise, curiosity, and intense emotional experiences. Windah Basudara is one of the most prominent YouTubers in this genre, with millions of followers and horror gameplay videos that frequently appear on trending lists. In addition to presenting adrenaline-pumping gameplay, Windah is also known as a humorous and highly interactive storyteller rather than merely a narrator, thereby transforming the viewing experience into an active and engaging activity rather than a passive one (Atmaditia, 2025).

In this context, the horror games featured on the YouTube channel can be categorized into several types. Psychological horror refers to fear that manipulates or affects an individual's physical condition through the mind and emotional state (Nugroho & Abdurakhman, 2020). Jumpscare horror relies on sudden surprises in the form of visual or auditory stimuli within the video, often causing spontaneous reactions such as sudden movements or screams from viewers. Horror adventure games focus on narratives involving mystery or mythology embedded within the surrounding environment (Rizki & Suryani, 2022). One of the most attention-grabbing types of content is folklore-based horror (local horror content), which incorporates cultural elements and myths from specific regions in Indonesia. Such content often raises issues related to audience reception, as it may strongly resonate with viewers' personal experiences and cultural backgrounds in interpreting the meaning of the content (Novianti, 2023).

The diversity of horror game categories makes them particularly interesting for reception studies. Horror games contain three components that can be analyzed through reception theory: they can be enjoyed by audiences as a form of thrilling and entertaining media (dominant reading); they can be appreciated without restrictions arising from differing backgrounds, experiences, or

### **Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)

belief systems (negotiated reading); and they may provoke feedback or rejection when the content is perceived as conflicting with viewers' personal beliefs (oppositional reading).

In this regard, horror content holds significant real-world implications for several reasons. Horror content can influence individuals' emotional and psychological states, with effects that vary from person to person, and it may also increase emotional sensitivity (Fajar & Lestari, 2021). Furthermore, horror games that present regional mythology or local myths can enhance audience understanding of cultural diversity. This curiosity encourages viewers to engage more deeply with the meanings conveyed by the content, thereby shaping how messages are received and interpreted.

This phenomenon represents an important issue in media communication studies, particularly in understanding how audiences interpret the media content they consume. Analyzing media content alone is insufficient. In modern mass communication, it is also essential to examine how media messages are interpreted and understood by diverse audiences (Septa & Saifudin, 2024). Reception theory provides one of the most appropriate frameworks for this purpose. According to Stuart Hall's theory, media meanings are not singular, and message meanings are never entirely determined by the sender or content producer. Instead, audiences have the freedom to accept, negotiate, or even reject the meanings embedded in media messages. Consequently, the horror game content produced by Windah Basudara has the potential to be interpreted differently by each viewer based on their social, psychological, cultural backgrounds, and life experiences (Prastowo & Palupi, 2025).

Meanwhile, Windah's presentation style characterized by exaggerated gamer screams, intense reactions, loud use of sound effects, and the insertion of humor amid terrifying moments also plays a significant role in shaping audience interpretations. Additionally, it cannot be denied that audiences possess varying levels of critical thinking skills when consuming information from digital media. This creates opportunities for further research into how meaning is constructed through the interaction between content, presenter, and audience (Saputra et al., 2022).

Based on the discussion above, the research problem of this study can be formulated into a single question: How is the reception analysis of horror game content on the Windah Basudara YouTube channel? This formulation serves as the foundation for examining how digital media operates in this context and how it is shaped, interpreted, and contested by audiences, particularly in the context of horror game content (Naufaldi & Susanti, 2023).

### **Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri  
Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)

A study conducted by Atmaditia, S. S. Z. (2025) entitled Reception Analysis of Mental Health Information on the Satu Persen YouTube Account found that mental health information delivered through YouTube content aims to explain mental health issues; however, audiences interpret this information differently. The study demonstrates that variations in message reception are highly dependent on viewers' personal experiences and their level of knowledge regarding mental health. As a result, not all audiences receive the message in a uniform or one-way manner. Some viewers actively negotiate the information presented, particularly when they hold differing perspectives or experiences related to mental health. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that informing the public about mental health content through digital media requires more interactive and contextual strategies to ensure that messages are effectively understood and accepted.

A study conducted by Prastowo, E. A., and Palupi, M. F. T. (2025) entitled Audience Reception Analysis of Electric Vehicle Content on the Fitra Eri YouTube Channel found that audience reception of electric vehicle-related content is strongly influenced by the creator's presentation style and the audience's level of technological knowledge. Their findings indicate that audiences do not merely receive messages passively; rather, they actively negotiate and even reject certain information that they perceive as irrelevant to their own contexts. Fitra Eri's informative and interactive approach also contributes to deeper audience engagement. However, variations in viewers' socio-economic backgrounds are also a significant factor shaping how audiences understand and respond to the content.

Another study by Saputra, H., Atmaja, S., and Nur'aeni, N. A. (2022), entitled Reception Analysis of Pornographic Content on the Frontal TV YouTube Channel, revealed that some viewers systematically rejected the content (oppositional position) due to moral and social normative reasons, while others attempted to accept or at least negotiate certain elements of the message for educational or entertainment purposes. Socio-cultural factors and individual backgrounds strongly influenced reception positions; therefore, the presence of pornographic content on digital media platforms has generated dynamic debates among audiences. These findings highlight the importance of understanding audiences' socio-cultural contexts and values in both the production and consumption of sensitive content on digital platforms.

### **Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)

The distinction between this study and previous research lies in its analytical focus. Earlier studies primarily concentrated on interaction processes related to presented content without providing a detailed explanation of the impacts of audience reception. In contrast, this study focuses on how communication processes within mass media generate audience reception and examines the psychological effects experienced by audiences after consuming content on the YouTube channel. Furthermore, this research elaborates on how messages are absorbed and interpreted by viewers, offering a detailed explanation of audience reception and cognitive outcomes after engaging with the presented content.

The urgency of this study stems from the growing dominance of digital media platforms, particularly YouTube, in shaping audience perceptions, emotions, and interpretive practices in the digital era. Contemporary mass communication is increasingly characterized by intensive visual content and interactive features that position audiences not merely as message recipients, but as active participants in meaning-making processes. As media content gains greater influence over how individuals think, feel, and behave, understanding audience reception becomes critically important.

In this context, horror game content is no longer consumed solely as a form of entertainment. Instead, it functions as a complex cultural text that combines visual intensity, emotional stimulation, interactive storytelling, and social engagement. YouTube operates as a participatory communication space where audiences actively negotiate, reinterpret, or even reject media meanings based on their psychological conditions, cultural backgrounds, and personal experiences. However, despite the widespread popularity of horror gameplay content in Indonesia particularly among younger audiences existing studies have largely emphasized content production, virality, and engagement metrics, while overlooking the deeper interpretive and psychological processes through which audiences construct meaning.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to media and communication scholarship by enriching audience-centered approaches, particularly through the application of Stuart Hall's reception theory in the context of digital horror content. Practically, this research offers insights that can assist content creators in understanding how their audiences emotionally and cognitively engage with horror media. By examining horror game content in Indonesia, this study encourages reflection on media production that goes beyond visual spectacle and emotional

### **Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)

impact, emphasizing the importance of meaning, cultural sensitivity, and audience interpretation in digital content creation (Winardi & Sinduwiatmo, 2024).

This study aims to analyze audience reception of horror game content on the Windah Basudara YouTube channel using a qualitative approach grounded in reception theory. The analysis encompasses how audiences assign meaning to or interpret viewed content, the social and psychological factors that significantly influence interpretation, and audience positioning within Stuart Hall's decoding categories. This research is expected to provide insight into the characteristics of digital media consumption in Indonesia, particularly among younger generations who constitute the primary users of the YouTube platform.

In Stuart Hall's reception theory, media content not only conveys messages but also embeds a preferred meaning, or dominant meaning, intended by the message creator to be understood by the audience. This preferred meaning represents an ideal form of interpretation that creators aim to instill through the encoding process. Within the context of this study, the preferred meaning presented by Windah Basudara through horror game content is not limited to delivering entertainment and tension, but also seeks to create an interactive, humorous, and emotionally engaging experience that fosters closeness with the audience (Simorangkir, 2020). However, this meaning is not always interpreted uniformly, as differences in psychological, cultural, and experiential backgrounds may lead to dominant, negotiated, or oppositional decoding positions. Consequently, audiences may fully accept the preferred meaning, reinterpret it through their own perspectives, or even reject the conveyed meaning when it is perceived as inconsistent with their personal experiences (Dian & Wahyuni, 2022).

## **METHOD**

The research method employed in this study is a qualitative approach. The first step undertaken in this research involves explaining the research techniques used in a systematic and appropriate manner so that they can be applied to categorize events or phenomena that are currently occurring. This study focuses on reception studies by examining audience interpretations of horror games featured on YouTube channels such as Windah Basudara. The analysis emphasizes a qualitative approach that takes into account social, cultural, and psychological factors in shaping audience interpretations of the content. Stuart Hall's Reception Theory is applied, particularly the

### **Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)

decoding framework, which classifies audience positions into dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional readings.

This study adopts a descriptive approach using Stuart Hall's reception analysis to explain how individuals understand messages conveyed through media content based on their personal experiences.

Data collection techniques consist of interviews, as this method is one of the most commonly used techniques in qualitative research. Interviews allow researchers to obtain in-depth and authentic information based on individuals' diverse experiences. The interviews were conducted by directly asking a series of questions to individuals who watch and actively follow the YouTube channel (Nalendra & Rizqi, 2024).

The interviews were carried out using a semi-structured interview technique, in which the researcher directly visited the research site and expanded or elaborated on previously prepared questions when necessary. This approach provides flexibility to capture how participants personally perceive and experience content elements such as narrative structure, exaggerated reactions, expressions, and humor, as well as how these elements are constructed within the presented content.

In addition, this study employed purposive sampling as a data selection technique. This approach was chosen because the informants had been previously identified as active followers and viewers of the Windah Basudara YouTube channel. Three informants were selected for interviews to obtain more detailed and comprehensive information regarding their perceptions of the channel's content. Conducting interviews with three informants was considered sufficient to provide in-depth insights into audience reception of Windah Basudara's YouTube content.

The criteria for selecting informants in this study were as follows: university students who actively watch and follow the Windah Basudara YouTube channel, participate as active audiences in the comment section, and are between 19 and 25 years old. This age range was chosen because individuals within this group are generally active university students who possess the cognitive maturity to process, manage, and respond to media content effectively. The informants who met these criteria were Ayik (female, 22 years old, seventh semester), Syifa (female, 22 years old, seventh semester), and Sherly (female, 22 years old, seventh semester).

### **Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)



The primary focus of data collection in this study was storytelling, as it is considered a key element that enables audiences to more quickly perceive and interpret the meanings conveyed in the content (Hermawan & Kristoyo, 2023).

Through interview-based data collection, the researcher was able to draw conclusions regarding audience reception after consuming content from the YouTube channel. Furthermore, the collected data were subjected to a data analysis process. Data analysis in this study employed thematic analysis, also referred to as data reduction, in which the researcher identified and selected relevant data that were most suitable for analysis based on recurring patterns and theoretical frameworks, particularly those related to decoding components.

The thematic analysis process involved data familiarization by repeatedly reviewing all interview transcripts, followed by identifying and defining themes related to decoding processes across the three reception positions. To enhance the credibility of the study, informants were invited to participate in a consultation process to confirm the accuracy and validity of interpretations, ensuring that the findings accurately reflected their perspectives and contributed to a comprehensive understanding of horror game consumption reception in digital media (Mahendra & Dananjaya, 2024).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Finding**

This chapter discusses the research findings obtained from the study, which describe in detail the experiences perceived and encountered by each informant involved in the research. The informants in this study were university students in Surakarta who watch and follow the Windah Basudara YouTube channel. The purpose of this research is to examine how audiences receive and interpret horror game content presented on the Windah Basudara YouTube channel based on their respective knowledge and experiences.

This study identifies the results of interviews according to predetermined analytical patterns. The central theme of this research concerns how audiences perceive, interpret, and receive horror game content, which is classified into three categories or decoding positions based

### **Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)

on Stuart Hall's reception theory. The explanations in this chapter are grounded in the individual experiences of viewers who watch and actively follow the Windah Basudara YouTube channel.

The profiles of the informants involved in this study consist of university students who regularly watch and follow the Windah Basudara YouTube channel. Most informants were able to clearly explain their perceptions after consuming content from the channel, which can be categorized into the three decoding positions: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional. These positions emerge as a result of differences in social background, cultural context, personal experiences, and psychological conditions among audiences when consuming horror game content. All three informants shared the view that watching the Windah Basudara YouTube channel provides an entertaining experience, as Windah's storytelling style is highly expressive and humorous.

The following section presents statements from the informants regarding their experiences and reception while watching the Windah Basudara YouTube channel:

#### Dominant-Hegemonic Position:

*"Menurut saya cara penyampaiannya sangat menarik. Ekspresi dan suaranya yang spontan bikin saya lebih menikmati sensasi horrornya. Terus Saya juga merasa apa yang dia tampilkan sudah tepat sebagai hiburan". (Ayik, 15 Desember 2025)*

*"Menurut saya cara penyampaiannya sangat menarik. Ekspresi dan suaranya Terus Saya juga merasa apa yang dia tampilkan sudah tepat sebagai hiburan, cara dia menyampaikan storytelling nya juga seru". (Syifa, 15 Desember 2025)*

*"Menurut saya cara penyampaiannya beda dari yang lain karena Ekspresi dan suaranya itu yang buat Saya juga merasa terhibur, cara dia menyampaikan storytelling nya juga mudah dipahami". (Sherly, 15 Desember 2025)*

#### Emotional Reactions Experienced by the Audience:

*"Pastinya ada rasa deeg-degan, takut juga, tapi juga terkadang saya merasa senang dan kadang juga ketawa ya mba soalnya lucu, seru gitu". (Ayik, 15 Desember 2025)*

*"Ada rasa tegang, takut juga, tapi saya merasa terhibur dan kadang juga ketawa ya mba soalnya penyampaiannya lucu banget". (Syifa, 15 Desember 2025)*

*"Pastinya ada rasa tegang, takut juga, tapi ya terhibur sih mba soalnya lucu juga pembawaanya". (Sherly, 15 Desember 2025)*

## **Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)

Based on the explanations provided by the three informants, all of them expressed that they accepted and understood Windah Basudara's horror game content as a form of entertainment that is enjoyable and thrilling, yet remains light due to its humorous presentation, expressive delivery, and intense interaction between the creator and the audience. Windah's storytelling style was also perceived as easy to follow and understand. These findings indicate that the preferred meaning constructed by Windah Basudara as a content creator was successfully received by the majority of the audience. Consequently, this reception contributes to building a sense of closeness and emotional connection between Windah Basudara and his viewers.

Furthermore, these findings demonstrate that Windah Basudara's content influences viewers on a psychological level, as reflected in the emotional reactions experienced while watching the videos. Audiences reported laughing and feeling entertained, which indicates that the content successfully generated feelings of joy and emotional satisfaction.

In the dominant-hegemonic position, audiences fully accept the meaning constructed by the media in accordance with the intentions of the content creator. In this context, Windah Basudara engages in an encoding process by presenting horror game content as entertainment that is tense yet light, expressive, and interspersed with humor. The informants in this study demonstrated full acceptance of this meaning without resistance. Theoretically, according to Stuart Hall, audiences in the dominant position decode messages in alignment with the media's intended meaning because they perceive it as consistent with their own values and expectations. This is evident in the informants' perceptions, who described Windah's expressions, vocal delivery, and storytelling style as "appropriate for entertainment," "engaging," and "easy to understand."

#### Negotiated Position:

*"Kadang kalau dia menjelaskan sesuatu yang menurut saya tidak sesuai biasanya saya langsung kasih feedback ataupun saya kasih saran dan kritikan lewat kolom komentar di channel Youtubanya atau kadang pernah juga sih mba waktu itu aku DM di Instagramnya windah". (Ayik, 15 Desember 2025)*

*"Kalau ada yang gak sesuai sama apa yang aku pahami biasanya aku langsung kasih feedback kaya waktu itu kasih saran dan kritikan lewat kolom komentar di channel Youtubanya". (Syifa, 15 Desember 2025)*

### **Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)

*“Yang sekiranya ngak sama dengan pemikiran saya biasanya aku langsung kasih Masukan kayak waktu itu lewat kolom komentar di channel Youtubnya”*. (Sherly, 15 Desember 2025)

Filtered Elements :

*“Iya ada mba misalnnnya ada kata-kata yang kasar kan ada tuh biasannya atau yang terlalu dramatis pasti saya saring”*. (Ayik, 15 Desember 2025)

*“ada mba pastinya kayak misalnnnya ada kata-kata yang menurut saya ngak etis kayak kasar gitu mba”*. (Syifa, 15 Desember 2025)

*“jelas ada pastinya kayak misalnnnya ada kata-kata kasar atau nga sopan mba”*. (Sherly, 15 Desember 2025)

Based on the statements of the three informants, in the process of negotiation they all accepted Windah Basudara's horror game content as a form of entertainment; however, they simultaneously adjusted and filtered certain elements of the content that they considered inconsistent with their own knowledge or personal experiences. They provided feedback in the form of comments on the YouTube channel, offering criticism or suggestions when they perceived aspects of the content as contradictory or inappropriate. This feedback was conveyed through the comment section provided on the channel.

Furthermore, all three informants stated that they did not fully agree with every aspect of the content presented. For instance, they expressed disapproval of the use of harsh or unethical language and reactions that were perceived as overly exaggerated. Nevertheless, they did not reject the content as a whole; instead, they chose to negotiate its meaning in accordance with their personal values and life experiences.

In this context, audience reception within the negotiated position demonstrates that viewers do not passively consume Windah Basudara's YouTube content. Although they generally accept the content as entertainment, audiences actively filter certain elements that they consider inappropriate, such as the use of coarse language or excessive expressions. This aligns with Stuart Hall's concept of negotiated reading, in which audiences accept the dominant meaning while simultaneously adapting it to their own values, experiences, and personal norms. The act of providing feedback through the comment section represents a form of active audience participation in negotiating the meaning of media messages.

### **Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)

### Oppositional Position:

*“Ya kadang tidak setuju sih mba kalau saya rasa tidak sesuai dengan saya pribadi, kalau itu biasanya saya kadang membenarkan apa yang sesuai dengan pengetahuan saya lewat komentar”.* (Ayik, 15 Desember 2025)

*“kadang ngak setuju mba kalau saya rasa tidak sesuai sama pengalaman serta pengetahuan saya pribadi, kalau itu biasanya saya kadang membenarkan apa yang sesuai dengan pengetahuan saya ataupun sesuai dengan fakta ceritanya lewat kolom komentar”.* (Syifa, 15 Desember 2025)

*“Ada yang ngak setujunya mba kalau saya kira ngak sesuai sama pengalaman saya, kalau itu biasanya saya kadang membenarkan apa yang sesuai dengan pemahaman saya ataupun sesuai dengan faktanya lewat kolom komentar”.* (Sherly, 15 Desember 2025)

Based on the statements of the three informants, during the oppositional process they actively rejected certain meanings when the content presented conflicted with their personal beliefs and cultural values. Horror content that highlights local culture may potentially generate controversy or negative impacts. Therefore, the informants explained that they would provide clarification and corrective interpretations through comments in the comment section of the Windah Basudara YouTube channel, based on factual cultural knowledge and their own experiences, beliefs, and understanding. This action was undertaken as an effort to minimize potential misunderstandings or conflicts related to the cultural representations discussed in the content.

In the oppositional position, informants actively rejected specific meanings conveyed in Windah Basudara's horror game content, particularly when such content was perceived as inconsistent with their experiences, knowledge, or cultural values. This rejection was expressed through attempts to clarify and correct meanings in the comment section. This finding aligns with Stuart Hall's explanation that audiences may understand media messages but interpret and respond to them by constructing alternative meanings. Moreover, this oppositional stance functions as a form of social control aimed at reducing misunderstandings and preventing potential cultural conflicts arising from horror content that represents specific cultural traditions or beliefs.

### Discussion

#### Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)

The discussion in this study explains the research findings regarding audience reception of horror game content on the Windah Basudara YouTube channel by referring to Stuart Hall's reception theory. This theory emphasizes that audiences are active agents who possess the ability to interpret media messages based on their individual backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge. The findings of this study indicate that audience reception of Windah Basudara's horror game content is divided into three decoding positions: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional. These findings directly support Stuart Hall's concept that the communication process does not end at the encoding stage by the message producer, but continues through the decoding process carried out by the message recipients. Thus, audiences play a crucial role in interpreting the meanings embedded in media content.

Audiences positioned within the dominant-hegemonic category fully accept the content as presented in accordance with the preferred meaning constructed by Windah Basudara. In this context, the preferred meaning frames horror game content as thrilling yet enjoyable entertainment, achieved through the combination of horror elements and humor conveyed through Windah Basudara's storytelling style. This acceptance indicates that the encoding strategies employed by Windah Basudara are both effective and successful. His expressive communication style fosters interactive and emotional closeness with audiences, generating positive psychological effects (Mahendra & Dananjaya, 2024). These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of creators' communication styles. Windah Basudara's exaggerated expressions, spontaneous screams, and contextual humor make audiences feel entertained and emotionally engaged, thereby positively influencing their psychological well-being. Such personal and expressive communication styles in YouTube content have been shown to enhance message acceptance and audience interest, allowing messages to be more easily received by viewers (Hermawan & Kristoyo, 2023). In this regard, Windah Basudara is not merely positioned as a message transmitter but also as a community builder who maintains strong interactive relationships with his audience.

What distinguishes this study from previous research is its explicit focus on the psychological and interpretive dimensions of audience reception within horror game content on YouTube. While earlier studies have primarily examined interaction patterns, engagement metrics, or general audience responses, this research offers a deeper analysis of how audiences emotionally

**Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)

and cognitively process horror content through Stuart Hall's decoding framework. By integrating audience narratives with the dominant, negotiated, and oppositional reading positions, this study reveals how meaning is not only accepted or rejected but also filtered through emotional reactions, cultural sensitivity, and personal experience.

Furthermore, this study introduces novelty by contextualizing reception theory within the genre of horror gameplay that incorporates local folklore and cultural references. This approach demonstrates that audience reception is not merely shaped by media form or creator style, but also by cultural proximity and belief systems embedded in the content. Through the case of Windah Basudara, this research highlights how exaggerated reactions, humor, and interactive storytelling create a hybrid media experience that produces varied psychological effects and interpretive outcomes. As such, this study extends the application of reception theory to contemporary digital gaming content and contributes new insights into how emotionally charged media operates within participatory digital platforms.

The findings also reveal the presence of audiences in the negotiated position. This position indicates that audiences neither fully accept nor completely reject media messages; instead, they adapt the meanings according to their personal experiences and knowledge. Audiences in this position continue to enjoy Windah Basudara's horror game content while imposing limitations on certain elements, such as the use of harsh language, excessive expressions, or the portrayal of myths perceived as inconsistent with their experiences. This reinforces Stuart Hall's reception theory, which posits that audiences have the autonomy to interpret messages based on their own knowledge frameworks. These findings align with previous studies indicating that gaming audiences tend to resist content that conflicts with their social and cultural values. As a result, they do not entirely accept the content but selectively retain aspects that align with their beliefs (Nalendra & Rizqi, 2024). In the negotiated position, audience resistance to certain perceptions is expressed through feedback in the form of criticism and suggestions posted in the comment section of the Windah Basudara YouTube channel.

Moreover, the study also identifies audiences occupying the oppositional position. In this position, audiences demonstrate explicit rejection of certain meanings conveyed in the content. They perceive horror game content that contradicts their beliefs as inappropriate for consumption and believe it should be criticized or corrected to prevent prolonged misunderstandings or conflict.

### **Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri  
Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)

This finding is consistent with previous research showing that audiences reject media messages when they conflict with personal beliefs, experiences, or knowledge (Saputra, Atmaja, & Nur'aeni, 2022). Such rejection is commonly expressed through comments on the YouTube channel, where audiences provide factual clarifications based on their own beliefs and cultural understandings.

Differences in audience reception are also influenced by the characteristics of the horror game genre itself. Horror games possess strong audiovisual elements that can rapidly trigger emotional responses among audiences. This observation is supported by previous studies indicating that visual and auditory components in horror games significantly influence audience psychological states, resulting in more immediate emotional reactions (Nugroho & Abdurakhman, 2020). In addition to psychological factors, cultural factors play a crucial role in the reception process. Horror content that incorporates local cultural elements can be interpreted differently by audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds. This is consistent with prior research suggesting that cultural representations in digital horror content generate varied interpretations due to differences in experiences and belief systems among audiences (Novianti, 2023).

In conclusion, this discussion affirms that audience reception of horror game content on the Windah Basudara YouTube channel is shaped by a strong interaction between media messages and the creator, mediated by the diverse backgrounds of individual viewers. The findings of this study not only support Stuart Hall's reception theory but also reinforce the conclusions of previous studies discussed earlier.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion on Audience Reception of Horror Game Content on the Windah Basudara YouTube Channel using Stuart Hall's reception theory, several conclusions can be drawn.

First, this study demonstrates that audiences are active participants in interpreting the horror game content they consume. Audiences do not merely accept media messages passively; instead, they engage in a decoding or filtering process shaped by their individual backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge.

Second, audience reception of Windah Basudara's horror game content can be classified into three decoding positions as proposed by Stuart Hall: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and

**Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language**

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ [nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id](mailto:nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id)



oppositional. The dominant-hegemonic position emerges as the most prevalent, in which audiences accept horror game content as thrilling yet enjoyable entertainment. In this position, the preferred meaning constructed by the creator is successfully received, supported by Windah Basudara's expressive communication style and intense interaction with audiences.

Third, the negotiated position appears among audiences who generally enjoy the content but adjust its meaning by selectively rejecting certain elements they perceive as inappropriate. Audiences in this position express their resistance by providing feedback in the form of criticism or suggestions through the comment section of the Windah Basudara YouTube channel. Meanwhile, the oppositional position reflects audiences' rejection of the dominant meaning of horror game content, particularly regarding cultural elements perceived as conflicting with their beliefs. This rejection is expressed through comments that seek to correct information based on factual knowledge aligned with their experiences, understanding, and belief systems. Differences in audience reception are influenced by the characteristics of the horror game genre itself, as well as by audiences' psychological and cultural backgrounds.

This study contributes to the development of communication science by strengthening audience-centered perspectives in digital media research through the application of Stuart Hall's reception theory to YouTube horror game content. By highlighting how audiences actively interpret, negotiate, and reject media meanings based on psychological and cultural backgrounds, this research enriches theoretical understanding of meaning-making processes in participatory digital environments. From a public interest perspective, the findings provide valuable insights for content creators and audiences to promote more responsible, culturally sensitive content production and to encourage critical media literacy in consuming emotionally driven digital media.

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## Nivedana: Journal of Communication and Language

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

Volume 7, Number 3, July – September 2026/ nivedana@radenwijaya.ac.id

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